

House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee

Testimony on HB 31

January 10, 2013

Montana agreed to 150 wolves and 15 breeding pairs. This is enough population to satisfy federal regulations that declare the wolf is "recovered" and re-listing by the Endangered Species Act is not required. Wolf populations in MT exceeded these requirements by 2003. Since then, western states have fought for control of the wolf to manage within federal guidelines. The Simpson- Tester bill made it possible and MT and ID has been in charge of seasons and bag limits for 2 years.

Wolf populations have increased dramatically over the last 10 years as shown by the graph on the poster board near the podium. While most agree that the wolf is key stone species and belongs in our ecosystem, we disagree with detractors that the wolf is the MOST important animal in our ecosystem. As with all animals there are is a sustainability issue. The metabolic requirements of the wolf are such that according to Doug Smith the YNP wolf biologist is that each wolf kills 18.6 elk a year. Montana has a bare minimum of 650 wolves and in all likely hood 30%+ higher.  $650 \text{ wolves} \times 18.6 \text{ elk killed/wolf} = 12,090 \text{ elk killed in MT annually!}$  (This is assuming the majority of their diet is elk). We are a state that harvests 16,000 elk annually. (see graph). As you can see MT is potentially doubling their elk harvest.

Last year during a wintertime flight survey, FWP biologist Julie Cunningham counted 5 elk in the Taylor Fork drainage of the upper Gallatin! This is an area that borders YNP and in years past wintered several hundred elk. There are many more stories like this around SW MT. Big Game hunting has shrunk accordingly and so has businesses relying on elk herds as well as FWP incomes from license sales.

We support legislation that liberalizes hunting seasons of wolves. These animals are smart and difficult to hunt successfully. We support the idea that those who are successful can have multiple licenses to harvest wolves and that they may need to use electronic calls and camo that does not incorporate hunter orange. In order to encourage more folks to be in the field hunting wolves, we need cheaper licenses for both resident and non-residents.

We believe that fair chase hunting is an important tool in managing any species of animal. However there is not one example in Canada, AK or any of the states where fair chase hunting has controlled any population of wolves. For the welfare of the prey species such as elk, mule deer, whitetail deer, moose, and big horn sheep we support the use of aerial control of wolves by Wildlife Services or FWP. IF fair chase hunting has not reduced wolf populations in severely impacted areas we believe that by surgically removing offending wolves we can begin to manage to a biologically sustainable number of wolves.

I urge you to support HB 31.

Rob Arnaud  
Outfitter/President  
Montana Hunting Company  
800-495-0221  
[www.montanahuntingcompany.com](http://www.montanahuntingcompany.com)